1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
AD5 Taiwan Hokkien AD5

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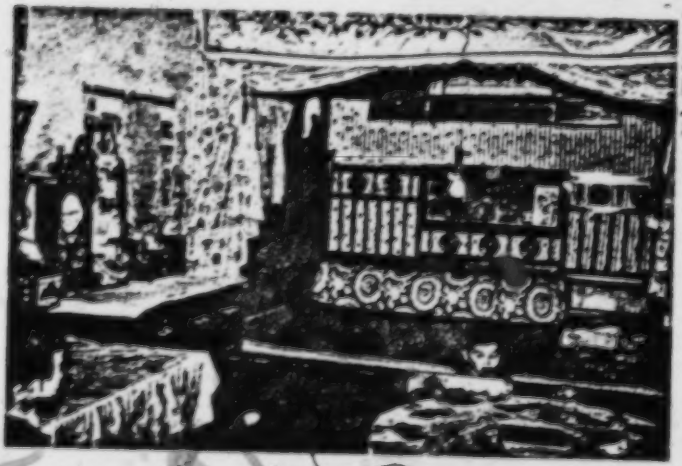
ABOVE: Housebuilding in Hsin Hsing. BELOW: Bedroom of a village landlord's married son.



352
353
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373

1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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[P.148-D]

142
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585
777
493 →

585
292 ←

ABOVE: "Good-luck lady" leads typical Hsin Hsing bride to sedan chair. LEFT: Son of successful Hsin Hsing village migrant and his bride. BELOW: *Pai-pai* to T'ien Kung for sixteen-year-old boy.

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1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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The birth takes place in the bedroom of the house, usually with little illumination available. Sometimes only one small electric bulb or a kerosene lamp is lit. In labor and during the birth, the woman seems to be relatively quiet, refraining from cries of pain. This may result from the usual stoicism of Chinese women, who are trained to show as little emotion as possible no matter how great the pain. To have other people hear any cries would be embarrassing, and thus cries are avoided.

A woman must not give birth to a child in her natal home. It is believed that such a birth would bring bad luck to her brothers' wives when they give birth and might even result in their being unable to have children. In one case, the married daughter of a Hsin Hsing landlord family did not get on well with her husband's parents. After a number of years of marriage she returned to live in her parents' home while her husband worked in the city and occasionally visited her. When it came time for her to give birth to her third child, she had to leave her brother's home and go to a hospital to have the baby, a most unusual occurrence in the village. She could not give birth in a neighbor's house, of course, since this might damage the birth prospects of the women of that house.

After the birth, according to a custom whose reason and origin are now unknown, the umbilical cord and afterbirth are wrapped in a rag and buried in the river bottom. Anything related to the birth, especially if it has been in contact with the woman's blood, is considered unclean.[1] The very room in which the birth takes place is likewise considered unclean, and anyone who enters the room for a month after the birth cannot then attend a wedding, since this would mean bad luck for the bride.

The baby is fed "sugar water" (sugar boiled in water) immediately after birth and until nursing begins. The baby begins to nurse about the end of the second or third day, when lactation begins.

After the birth, the new mother eats with the family at the next regular meal, and there is no change in her meal schedule. The food she eats, however, is special, and often consists of fresh fish, chicken, wine, and other such "good and rich foods." These are felt to encourage the production of milk and, more important, to help the mother regain her strength. These foods are usually gifts sent during the first month by the new mother's brothers and sisters. Neighbors and friends may also send such gifts, and the household of the new mother gives them "oil rice" (fried glutinous rice) in return.

It is felt that the new mother should do as little work as possible and rest frequently during the first month after the birth. If she belongs to a joint or stem family, this period of rest is virtually assured. If, however, the family is small, she must depend upon help from *ch'in tsu*,

1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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offers an acceptable explanation of the failure within the framework of the system.

THE ANCESTRAL-WORSHIP ROOM OR *KUNG T'ING*

The village family or *tsu* perform most religious and magical activities in the *kung t'ing* where the statues of the gods and the ancestral tablets are housed. This is a central room in every village house (see house diagram in Chapter 2), whether it is a large *tsu* house with many apartments belonging to component families or the small house of a nuclear family. Some households which reside in the apartments of a large *tsu* house reserve a small part of one of their own rooms as a kind of *kung t'ing* where they maintain ancestral tablets bearing the names of their own deceased parents or their own most recent ancestors. However, these households continue to share in the maintenance of the main *kung t'ing* of the *tsu* where a tablet recording all the names of the *tsu* ancestors is housed.

The *kung t'ing* of a Hsin Hsing village house is fairly representative of those found in the homes of the area and the homes of urban Taiwanese. (Today, usually it is only the mainlanders in Taiwan who do not have such a *kung t'ing* set up in their homes.) The appointments of the room include an altar which stands against the wall opposite the main entrance. Above the altar may hang two calligraphy scrolls which flank a scroll depicting the Buddhist goddess Kuan Yin. Statues of the main Taoist gods, a few in glass boxes, and the ancestral tablets stand on top of the altar. Incense receptacles and wine cups are placed before the statues of the gods. In front of the altar stands a large table on which food offerings are placed during worship. On ritual occasions this table is moved away from the altar and used as a dining table. The last appointment is an incense pot which hangs from the ceiling a few feet from the entrance to the *kung t'ing*, wherein the spirit of T'ien Kung, the highest god, is said to reside. He is not represented in statue form.

In many respects the care and function of the *kung t'ing* indicate the nature of village religion and its relation to other aspects of village life. Although this room is the most important single site for the performance of ritual activities, it is by no means limited to "sacred" events. The family entertains guests here on both religious and non-religious occasions, and it also serves as a meeting place for the family to sit and talk. Because it contains an electric light bulb, children play or do their homework here, and women gather here to work on fiber hats. Perhaps the most "profane" of the uses to which this room is put, particularly if the *kung t'ing* belongs to only one or a few households, is its use as a storage place for sacks of rice or fertilizer and mounds of sweet potatoes.